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ABSTRACT

A study explored the socialization process of beginning teachers participating in formal teacher induction programs. The focus was on perceived sources of influence on classroom practices. The findings suggest that a wide array of features compete for the attention of the first year teachers as they make instructional decisions. Over the course of the year, beginning teachers sort out these forces and attend to some more than others. The perceived sources of influence are similar at the end of the first year of teaching to those reported by experienced teachers who are operating in a similar context. Induction programs appear to contribute positively to the socialization process with respect to classroom practices through the mechanism of the peer or supporting teacher. The induction programs exert little in the way of positive influence on classroom practices through the evaluation procedures used. (CB)

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BEGINNING TEACHERS AND CHANGES IN SELF-PERCEIVED SOURCES OF INFLUENCE ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICES

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Report No. 9067

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BEGINNING TEACHERS AND CHANGES IN SELF-PERCEIVED SOURCES OF INFLUENCE ON CLASSROOM TEACHING PRACTICES

Teachers make instructional decisions in a complex and often contradictory environment. The norms and expectations of peers and superiors, the teacher's knowledge, beliefs and attitudes regarding content and pedagogy, the physical and organizational characteristics of the school and classroom along with many other forces combine to influence the way in which an instructional program is enacted. Experienced and successful teachers often give the impression of having sorted out for themselves these sources of influence in ways that indicate they have achieved some control over their environment or at least a stage of equilibrium with the surrounding context. Beginning teachers, in contrast, often appear out of control or disjointed in their attempts to integrate an instructional program as they are impacted by these same forces.

Research in teacher education tells us very little about the nature of the sources of influence on practice, and even less about the ways in which beginning teachers move to resolve the perceived conflicts and achieve the same level of control as their experienced counterparts. The success of our efforts to understand how to improve teaching in classrooms hinges in large part on our understanding of the forces that shape and either directly or indirectly constrain teaching practices. It would seem logical to assume that in order to be effective, programs that are designed to improve teaching must take advantage of the most powerful sources of influence to the degree that they lend themselves to direct manipulation. Successful teacher education programs at the preservice, induction, or inservice levels should use these sources of influence in order to construct training programs for teachers.

The goal of the research to be reported on in this paper was to advance our understanding of the sources of influence on classroom teaching practices with particular attention to beginning teachers as they moved through their first year of teaching. This study was one small part of a larger investigation into the nature, implementation, and effects of the mandated beginning teacher programs in two states conducted by the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) program at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin (Griffin, O'Neal, Barnes, Edwards, Hoffman, & Paulissen, in progress).

Background

There are two literatures that are important as background for interpreting this study: teacher socialization and induction programs. No attempt will be made to offer a comprehensive review of these topics in this section of the report as integrative reviews are readily available on both teacher socialization (e.g., Wells, 1984; Zeichner, 1980) and induction programs (e.g., Tisher, 1982; Zeichner, 1979). Rather, our goal will be to present a brief summary of the critical issues, trends, and findings from each of these areas as they relate to the study to be reported.

Teacher Socialization

Socialization, as a broad concept, has been described as the process by which one acquires the knowledge and skills to assume a role in a particular organizational structure (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Research on teacher socialization has focused primarily on the entry of new teachers into the school setting. Lacey (1977) describes teacher socialization to include not only learning how to teach, but also the acceptance and even identification with the values, attitudes, and interests of the teaching profession.

Much of the research in teacher socialization has focused on the identification of the socializing agents or mechanisms at work in the process (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1984). Wells (1984) classifies the research on factors influencing the socialization of teachers in three areas: university training; the school bureaucracy; and the impact of role models. Studies investigating the influence of university training typically reveal a disdain for coursework which is too heavily weighted in theory (Pataniczek & Isaacson, 1981) and a respect for their student teaching experience as being eminently practical and useful (Griffin et al., 1983). The influence of the school bureaucracy, in terms of norms and expectations for performance, appears to be mediated primarily through such mechanisms as program requirements (e.g., curriculum guides, teacher manuals) and the procedures and criteria used to evaluate teachers (Eddy, 1969). Zeichner and Tabachnick (1984) refer to these as institutional control mechanisms. The research on role models and teacher socialization has centered on two areas: experiences as a student and contacts with teaching colleagues. Lortie (1975) was among the first to investigate the influence of individual's 15+ years in school as a socializing force. Teaching models, he posits, are internalized slowly over this long period of contact. There is some research evidence to support the argument that students indeed teach as they were taught (e.g., Rogers & Schuttenburg, 1979; Silverston & Deichmann, 1974). The influence of other teachers has been studied from the view of the cooperating teacher (e.g., Friebus, 1977) and the influence of the experienced colleague working in the same school setting (e.g., Eddy, 1969). Both groups appear to exert a strong influence on the socialization process.

In addition to the three areas of university training, school bureaucracy, and role models discussed by Wells, a number of researchers have speculated on the influence of more allusive but not less compelling factors in teacher socialization. These include students as socializing agents (e.g., Doyle, 1977); the structural characteristics of the school as a workplace (e.g., Dreeben, 1970); and the belief systems and human tendencies of the beginning teacher (e.g., Stephens, 1967).

In summary, the teacher socialization literature suggests that a myriad of factors influence in unclear ways the processes of learning to teach. While these sources appear to be independent at a conceptual level, in reality they are inextricably bound together in a single context. Lortie's (1973) call, issued over a decade ago, for studies that assess the relative contributions of several agents or mechanisms under particular conditions remains an unanswered challenge and yet as pressing a concern to the research community today as it was then.

Induction Programs

Formal programs for the beginning or first year teacher are a relatively new phenomenon in this country. The impetus for these so-called "induction" programs has apparently risen not out of concern over the needs of first year teachers as revealed by research over the past two decades, but out of the public's concern for maintaining quality teachers in schools. The first year of teaching has in effect become the proving grounds for demonstrating teaching competencies.

As of fall 1983, there were four states in our country with operational beginning teacher programs and eleven other states were in varying stages of developing their own programs (Defino & Hoffman, 1984). The four operational programs share some critical features. They each employ

performance-based assessment of teaching competencies as the basis for evaluating first year teachers. They each use this data as the primary source of information for making decisions on both continued employment and state certification. In addition, most of the programs call for creation of support mechanisms to assist the first year teacher in developing the desired competencies.

The beginning teacher programs in the two states included in this study provided a "support" or "assessment" team for each first year teacher. These teams included an experienced teacher, an administrator, and one other teacher educator. In one state the "other educator" on the team was a teacher educator from the local university/college. In the other state, the "other educator" was an individual from the district level offices (e.g., a curriculum coordinator/specialist). The team is involved both in assisting and evaluating the beginning teacher as s/he moves through their first teaching year. Although specific requirements for activities and number of contacts differ between the two state programs, the general pattern was for each team member to meet individually, observe the new teacher, offer feedback, and eventually make recommendations on certification for the first year teacher for whom they were responsible.

There is little in the way of research evidence currently available to document the implementation, processes, or effects of these induction programs. However, many states in our country are proceeding with the creation of beginning teacher programs and in most cases these programs are being modeled after one or more of the four existing programs. The impetus for these programs is derived from state policy mandates and not local initiatives. The fact that such policy mandates are difficult to modify

once they are set in motion suggests that now is a critical time to examine the features of these programs for their validity.

The purpose of this research was to advance our understanding of the impact of induction programs on teacher socialization. Specifically, the goal of this research was to investigate the nature of the sources of influence on classroom teaching practices with particular attention to beginning teachers participating in formal induction programs.

Method

As stated earlier, this study was one small part of a larger investigation into the first year teaching programs in two states. Two districts in each of the two states were identified as research sites for the study based on their reputation for excellence.

Subjects

A total of 16 first year teachers and 16 experienced teachers were selected for participation in the study. There were four first year teachers and four experienced teachers in each of the four districts studied. Subjects were selected so as to achieve an equal balance between elementary and secondary level teachers. The 16 beginning and 16 experienced teachers were matched through their beginning teacher programs such that each pair was teaching at the same school and for the most part at the same grade level or in the same content specialization. The peer teacher was a member of the beginning teachers support/assessment team.

Procedures

Data for the study were collected at two different points in time. In the fall of the year each subject was interviewed by a member of the research team. This face-to-face interview was designed to explore sources of influence on classroom teaching practices. Eleven sources of influence

were focused initially. These 11 sources had been identified through a review of the teacher socialization and induction literatures. The sources were: (1) the teacher's family; (2) their own experiences as a student; (3) contacts with another professional in the immediate school setting; (4) contacts with another outside of the immediate school setting; (5) evaluation procedures; (6) day-to-day experiences with the students in the classroom; (7) undergraduate coursework; (8) student teaching; (9) program requirements (e.g., teacher manuals, curriculum guides); (10) the principal; and (11) the community.

Each of these 11 sources of influence was typed on a separate card. The interviewer began by asking the respondent to consider the kinds of things that influenced their classroom teaching practices. They were asked to read over the 11 cards and consider the ways in which and the degree to which each was influential. They were also asked if there were other sources of influence on their classroom practices that were not identified on the cards. If other sources were identified, additional cards were written at this time. The next task for the respondent was to rank the cards from the most to least influential on their classroom practices. Once the ranking was complete, the interviewer went through each of the sources of influence, starting with the one ranked most influential, asking the respondent to: (a) rate the importance of the source of influence on their teaching practices on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all" to 5 = "extremely"); and (b) give specific examples of how this source had influenced practice.

The second data collection point came in the late spring of the year when each of the respondents completed a brief questionnaire. Here the subjects were asked to consider once again the issue of sources of influence

on their teaching. Specifically, they were asked whether there had been any changes over the year in terms of the degree of influence by any of the sources. The respondents were provided with a summary record of their responses from the fall interview and directed to change the ratings and rankings if they felt there had been shifts in influence over the year. Where changes were noted, the respondents were asked to explain in what way sources had become more or less influential.

Data Analysis

The rankings and ratings from the fall interview were examined statistically using a one-way analysis of variance for differences between the response patterns for beginning and experienced teachers. Only two teachers added an additional source of influence to the predetermined set of 11 thus providing some validation for the selected list of potential influences. The recorded interviews from the fall data collection effort were transcribed and analyzed for trends in the supporting commentary. The data collected through the questionnaires in the spring were analyzed qualitatively for patterns and trends across the two groups of respondents.

Results

The quantitative data collected through the fall interview are summarized in Table 1. Each of the sources of influence is identified with its ranking and rating by the two groups of teachers. Statistically significant differences between the groups in rankings and ratings are noted. For beginning teachers, only one source of influence (contacts out of school) was given a mean rating of less than 2.0 (somewhat influential). The experienced teachers rated four sources (contacts out of school, evaluation procedures, undergraduate courses, and student teaching) at a mean level lower than 2.0 The three highest rankings for first year

Table 1

Fall Rankings and Ratings for
Sources of Influence on Practice

	Beginning Teacher				Experienced Teacher			
	Rank		Rate		Rank		Rate	
Source of Influence	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
1. Family	7.9*	3.5	3.7	1.80	4.8*	3.7	3.6	2.00
2. Experiences as a student	7.4	3.4	2.3	1.30	5.9	3.4	2.3	1.30
3. Contacts in school	3.9	2.0	3.4*	.72	5.4	2.7	2.5*	1.10
4. Contacts out of school	7.9	2.9	1.9	1.40	7.1	2.5	1.4	1.00
5. Evaluation	6.8	3.0	2.1	1.20	7.6	2.5	1.6	1.30
6. Day-to-day experiences	1.9	1.3	3.8	.40	2.1	1.1	3.8	.58
7. Undergraduate courses	6.6	3.2	2.3*	1.10	8.4	2.9	1.3*	1.30
8. Student teaching	4.9	3.0	2.9*	1.20	6.7	3.4	1.9*	1.40
9. Program requirements	5.7	2.7	2.7	1.20	5.7	3.2	2.4	1.30
10. Principal	6.4*	2.8	2.7	.89	5.0*	2.5	2.7	.99
11. Community	7.9*	2.3	2.2	.80	6.3*	2.0	2.4	1.15

*$p < .05$

teachers were: day-to-day experiences with students (X=1.9); contacts in school (X=3.9); and student teaching (X=4.9). The three highest rankings for experienced teachers were: day-to-day experiences with students (2.1); the family (4.8); and the principal (5.0). Statistically significant differences between the rankings of the two groups were found in the areas of the family, the principal, and the community. Each of these sources of influence had a higher mean ranking in the experienced teacher group. Statistically significant differences between the ratings of the two groups were found in the areas of contacts in school, undergraduate courses, and student teaching experiences. Each of these sources of influence had a higher mean rating among the beginning teacher group.

Questionnaires were returned by 12 of the 16 first year teachers who participated in the fall interviews. Responses revealed five principle areas in which the beginning teachers perceived changes in the degree of influence. Six of the 12 responding indicated that their own experiences as a student were perceived as more influential to them than had been the case in the fall of the year. These were all secondary level teachers. Nine of the 12 commented on the area of contacts in school. Six reported an increase in influence over the fall. Two reported a significant positive influence but overall less influence for this factor than had been the case earlier. Only one beginning teacher reported a decline and she noted a negative influence. Six beginning teachers mentioned the area of evaluation. Five reported that this source had become less influential. Only one indicated that it had become more important. The four first year teachers who mentioned the area of day-to-day contacts indicated that this source had become more influential. The final area mentioned by first year teachers was that of the principal. Five teachers reported changes in this

source. No clear pattern was evident here. Some reported heightened influence; others a decline.

The patterns in responses for the experienced teachers on the spring questionnaire were less clear. Overall, not nearly as many changes were reported from the fall interview as was the case with the first year teachers. There was a slight decline in the rating of importance of contacts in school over the fall interview. There was a slight increase in the rating of importance of day-to-day contacts with students.

Discussion

The findings will be discussed in terms of three major themes: (1) ratings and rankings of sources as they converge and contrast across the two groups of teachers; (2) changes in the perceived degree of influence over the year; and (3) features of mandated induction programs as they relate to sources of influence. Quantitative data from the ratings and rankings as well as the qualitative data from the commentary offered in the interviews and written on the questionnaires will be referred to in this discussion.

Ratings and Rankings of Sources of Influence

The ratings of importance by beginning and experienced teachers suggest that there are indeed many different sources of influence competing for attention as the teacher makes decisions regarding classroom practices. The fact that the overall mean rating for all sources by experienced teachers (2.4) was lower than the rating for beginning teachers (2.7) considered with the fact that the number of sources rated below 2.0 was far greater (4 to 1) for the experienced teachers suggests that the degree and number of sources pressing on beginning teachers is perceived greater.

Day-to-day experiences with students was ranked overwhelmingly as the most significant source of influence by both groups of teachers. An "adjustment" theme often tied to immediate feedback ran through many of the comments in this source of influence:

Beg. Tchr. "How they're behaving determines...how I approach them...in terms of work...in terms of what I expect from them."

Exp. Tchr. "I adjust to the kids day-to-day."

Beg. Tchr. "It varies by personality of the class in terms of pacing of instruction."

Beg. Tchr. "(You) must be flexible in your teaching...you plan...you adjust."

Feedback was a second theme to the commentary offered under this source of influence.

Beg. Tchr. "Some things work some don't...a lot of 'em I brought with me don't."

Exp. Tchr. "The kids are telling me what to do...my practices are totally dependent on the feedback I get from these children."

Beg. Tchr. "(The students) give you cues as to what's working."

A second theme in evidence under this source of day-to-day experiences is the notion of "negotiated learning."

Beg. Tchr. "...I think...you only learn organization and discipline and that sort of thing by doing it."

For beginning teachers the next highest area of influence in terms of rankings was "in school contacts." Three types of contacts were commented on. By far the greatest number related to the peer/consulting teacher in the induction programs.

Beg. Tchr. "I go to her for advice."

Beg. Tchr. "...We compliment each other...I go to her and she can come to me."

A second type of contact was through beginning teachers who had been in the same school as a student teacher and maintained contact with their former cooperating teacher. The third and final type of contact was in working with grade level teams.

The third highest area of influence for the beginning teachers was the student teaching experience.

Beg. Tchr. "...an enjoyable experience...I learned to cope with teaching..."

Beg. Tchr. "It was practical."

Beg. Tchr. "...I saw role models...discipline and so on...how to handle it (teaching)."

Four of the eight beginning teachers who ranked student teaching in their top three sources of influence had completed student teaching in the same school where they were teaching. For these beginning teachers, student teaching had been particularly influential.

Beg. Tchr. "Well, I taught first grade here, same books, same teacher, and everything, and so it was very influential."

Beg. Tchr. "Extremely (influential) since I student taught here...same class, same level...same semester...everything I do reflects student teaching."

Beg. Tchr. "I did it here in fourth grade...so I did a lot of things just like I did them when I student taught."

For experienced teachers, the second highest ranked source of influence after "day-to-day experiences with students" was their family as a child or young person. This was a difficult area to flesh out of the commentary in terms of relating the sources of influence to practices. A number of the experienced teachers seemed to feel that their practices were a close reflection of themselves as individuals. There was a sense of integration, identification, and life-long personal commitment to teaching as a career and a profession. There were only a few beginning teachers who ranked this

factor high, and in those cases the commentary typically revealed a parent or parents who were educators themselves.

The third highest area for experienced teachers was the principal. The commentary in this area reflected positive regard for the principal as an instructional leader in the school.

Exp. Tchr. "She's always helping us...behavior...curriculum... parents...she helps you find the answer."

Exp. Tchr. "I have so much respect for her...I want to do as good a job as I possibly can."

Exp. Tchr. "I teach a lot of time because my principal believes a certain way."

Changes in Sources of Influence Over the Year

In terms of reported changes in influence from the beginning of the year to the end, the 12 experienced teachers responding to the final questionnaire did not reveal many changes at all in terms of ratings and rankings of factors let alone any systematic trends or patterns. There was a slight decline in the influence of "contacts in school" reported by a few teachers. And this was attributed by at least one experienced teacher to "less interactions by virtue of the time of year."

In contrast, there were numerous shifts reported by the beginning teachers. Over one half of those responding on the questionnaire indicated a rise in the perceived influence of their own experiences in school. This shift was reported predominantly by the beginning teachers in junior and senior high school settings.

Beg. Tchr. "(My own) experiences as a student were more influential than I thought."

Beg. Tchr. "(I have) a more conscious reliance on (my own) experiences as a youngster."

Of course most of these beginning teachers were just four years removed from the role of students in such classrooms themselves.

Contacts in school, ranked second highest in the fall interviews by beginning teachers, was reported to have increased in intensity by over half of the respondents. Commentary here continued to focus on involvement with their peer/consulting teacher.

Day-to-day experiences with students, ranked number 1 in the fall interview, was reported to have increased in intensity by four of the beginning teachers with the rest indicating the intensity remained high. The heightening of these two sources of influence, already high to begin with, would seem to indicate that beginning teachers--like their experienced counterparts--were sorting out or focusing their attention on a few rather than a broad array of sources.

The only factor that showed any kind of systematic decrease in perceived influence among the beginning teachers was "evaluation procedures." The mean ranking for the beginning teachers on this factor in the fall was 6.8 with a rating of 2.9 as compared to a ranking of 7.6 and a rating of 3.4 by the experienced teachers. Five of the beginning teachers indicated that "evaluation" had declined over the year as a source of influence on their classroom practices. Some teachers reported that they were "not threatened" by the system of evaluation anymore, one referred to the system as a "joke" and "not meaningful."

Induction Programs and Sources of Influence

Our data indicated that the beginning teacher programs in place in these districts did appear to impact teachers. First, it appears that the "consulting" or "peer" teacher concept was perceived by the beginning teacher to be a significant positive force in affecting classroom practices. The evaluation component of these programs in terms of "performance assessment" measures, however, was perceived as insignificant. And in the

case of some teachers the evaluation features appeared to cause irritation and even hostility toward the system. The influence of the principal as support team leader is something of an enigma. In those cases where the principal was rated high the comments of the beginning teacher reflected a perception of the principal as an instructional leader. In those cases where the principal was rated moderate or low as a source of influence, the comments of the beginning teacher reflected a principal who was maintaining a low profile in the school. This pattern, however, did not always hold up as two of our beginning teachers in one district were in the same school. One saw this principal as helpful and providing leadership while the other beginning teacher saw his role as unimportant and at times detrimental to her work as a teacher. No beginning teacher referred to the "other educator" from his or her induction program team as being an important source of influence on practice. However, it should be noted, that other data sources indicated that a few beginning teachers commented on the valuable information the other educator provided.

Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

The data collected in this study capture but a small part of the complicated socialization process that beginning teachers undergo as they enter the profession. The beginning teacher is seen as one who is bombarded from many sides with information, prescriptions, and expectations that act to influence classroom practices. The first year of teaching involves a process of sorting out and selectively attending to key sources that are useful in "surviving" and ultimately achieving some degree of success. The "experienced" teacher is seen as one who has achieved something of a state of equilibrium with respect to which forces are to be attended to and acted on.

This study is, of course, limited in that it considers only "perceptions" and then only to the degree that perceptions can be captured through structured interviews and questionnaire-type tasks. The study is further limited in that it examines only first year teachers participating in formal induction programs. More research is needed to further validate and extend the findings. In particular, studies are needed that complement the kind of data collected here with a more direct focus on classroom practices. Studies, for example, that identify through classroom observations specific practices used and then trace these practices back to their source through structured interviews are needed.

As far as practical implications for the development or revision of beginning teacher programs, this study would lend support to the consulting/peer teacher concept. However, the findings from this study would suggest that there be some rethinking of the evaluation processes used. The data in this study does not lead one to conclude that formative evaluation shapes practice. The findings also suggest that formal programs for beginning teachers might be more powerful if the student teaching experience as formally connected to the induction experience. To date, induction programs do not take advantage of this important source of influence. While the logistics for accomplishing such a connection are difficult to envision, the benefits are apparent in these data when one looks at the reports from the beginning teachers who had their preservice experience in the same school setting.

Summary

This study was proposed as a means of exploring the socialization process of beginning teachers participating in formal induction programs. The focus was on perceived sources of influence on classroom practices. The

findings suggest that a wide array of features compete for the attention of the first year teacher as they go about making instructional decisions. Over the course of the year, beginning teachers sort out these forces out and attend to some more than others. The perceived source of inference are similar at the end of the first year of teaching to those reported by experienced teachers who are operating in a similar context. Induction programs appear to contribute positively to the socialization process with respect to classroom practices through the mechanism of the peer or supporting teacher. The induction programs exert little in the way of positive influence on classroom practices through the evaluation procedures used.

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